

Records of "The Commandments of the Seven Wise Men" in the 3rd c. B.C.

The Revered "Greek Reading-book" of the Hellenistic World.

Among the known pupils of Aristotle, a certain Klearchos of Soli in Cyprus seems to have been rather famous in his times.¹ All what we know now about this once well known scholar, however, are a few fragments and titles from his lost works and the feeling we get from them that he had travelled extensively in the Hellenistic Near East and as far as India.²

Excavating the Greco-Bactrian city at Ai-Khanum in Afghanistan, the French archaeologists of the field-team were extremely happy on the 22nd of October 1966. What they had uncovered on this day was a rather unexpected and very important find. It was a stone base for a stele, with a Greek epigram inscribed in four lines (Fig. 1) and to its right five more lines of ethical commandments.³ As far as the excavators knew at first sight, this was the first and

the earliest (3rd c. B.C.) Greek inscription ever found in this outpost of the Hellenistic world.⁴

The epigram was unpublished and unknown in Greek literature. Its author, Klearchos, was beyond any doubt the far-travelled pupil of Aristotle mentioned above.⁵ However, the interesting story that the epigram narrated to us was something that we had never heard before. The stele, once standing on the base with the epigram, was a copy of the "Commandments of the Wise Men" originally inscribed on a stele dedicated at Delphi in Greece. Klearchos assures the reader that he himself copied the "Commandments" very carefully from the original inscription at Delphi, and that this copy was used for reinscribing them on the stele he dedicated in the shrine of the Greco-Bactrian city's "hero-founder." What was the

Inscr. Bactriana: Ref. Ed.: Louis Robert, *CRAI* 1968, 421-424. 3rd c. B.C.

- Ἀνδρῶν τοι σοφὰ ταῦτα παλαιότερων ἀνάκει[τα]ι
2 ῥήματα ἀριγνώτων Πυθοῖ ἐν ἡγαθείαι,
ἐνθεν ταῦτ[α] Κλέαρχος ἐπιφραδέως ἀναγράφας
4 εἴσατο τηλαυγῇ Κινέου ἐν τεμένει.

*These wise commandments of men of old,
– Words of well known thinkers – stand dedicated
in the most holy Pythian shrine;
From there Klearchos copied them very carefully
and brought them here in the shrine of Kineas
to shine far around it.*

1. F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* No. 3: Klearchos (Basel, 1948).

2. L. Robert, "De Delphes à l'Oxus: Inscriptions grecques nouvelles de la Bactriane," *CRAI* 1968, 442-454. *Al.N. Oikonomides*, "The Lost Delphic Inscription with the Commandments of the Seven and P. Univ. Athen. 2782," *ZPE* 37 (1980) 179-183.

3. L. Robert (note 2), 421-424. J. et L. Robert, *Bull.* 1969, 601. Inst. F. Courby, *Nouveau Choix d'Inscriptions Grecques*, (Paris, 1971) 183-185. No. 37.

4. F.L. Holt, "Discovering the Lost History of Ancient Afghanistan: Hellenistic Bactria in Light of Recent Archaeological and Historical Research," *AncW* (1984) 3-28.

5. L. Robert (note 2), 441-454. *Al.N. Oikonomides* (note 2), 179 note 5.

reason for that? Klearchos answers "so that the Commandments will shine far around (to the Asian lands and peoples) the shrine of Kineas."⁶

Can we identify these "Commandments" so highly esteemed by Klearchos? Actually the second inscription on the base with the epigram identifies them automatically for us. It seems that the stone-cutter who reinscribed the "Commandments" which Klearchos dedicated at Ai-Khanum had left no space on the stele for the last five of them. So he went on and added these overflowing commandments on the base of the stele in his effort to make the text complete.⁷

Used as a first school book for the Greek world from the 6th c. B.C. down to the fall of the Byzantine Empire (1453 A.D.) and some centuries beyond it,⁸ "The Commandments of the Seven Wise Men" is one of the 'didactic' ancient Greek texts that have been preserved by the philological tradition. Basically known to us from an ancient copy of the Delphic inscription by a philosopher named Sosiades,⁹ (which Ioannes Stobaeus included in his *Anthologium*) "The Commandments" are now known also from hundreds of Byzantine and later manuscripts originating from other text traditions.¹⁰ It was printed for the first time in Venice by Aldus Manutius in 1495 (from a different text tradition than the Sosiades version), reprinted in different "didactic anthologies" later, included in collections of *Anecdota Graeca*,¹¹ and attracted some attention by classical

scholars,¹² but always as a minor text. Nobody, from the Renaissance down to 1966, really believed that this collection of "Commandments" originated from the text of the early and famous inscription which once stood "in the most holy Pythian shrine" at Delphi. We needed the testimony of Klearchos to awaken us to reality concerning the early date and the real scholarly value of the "Commandments of the Seven." Was our Klearchos the first learned man in the Greek world who spoke so highly of the "Commandments of the Seven?" Not really. Wherever in ancient Greek literature the "Commandments" are mentioned, it is only with words of respect and admiration.¹³ Herakleitos praised them,¹⁴ Socrates (according to Plato) bowed to them.¹⁵ Τὰ ἐν Δελφοῖς γράμματα τὰ σοφὰ ταῦτα. . . τό τε Γνωθὶ σαυτὸν καὶ τὸ Μηδὲν ἄγαν καὶ ἅλλα τὰ τοιαῦτα. (= *These wise precepts inscribed at Delphi. . . like the "Know Thyself," "Nothing in excess" and the other similar to them*).

Sixty-four years before the discovery of the inscribed base at Ai-Khanum, another Greek inscription of the 3rd c. B.C. was published. Found in an excavation at the ruins of Miletropolis (= *Ghirmasti*) in Asia Minor, this inscription was the first epigraphical record of the "Commandments of the Seven" to become known. Fifty-five "Commandments" were readable on this major fragment from a stele, which in all probability, once stood in the gymnasium of Miletropolis.¹⁶

6. It is clear that Klearchos, according to his own words, sees the educational value of the "Commandments of the Seven" as a major power for the Hellenisation of the peoples living beyond the Greco-Bactrian city at Ai-Khanoum.

7. According to L. Robert (note 2) 429-430.

8. According to Plato (*Hipparchus*, 228c-229) the "Commandments of the Seven" were already established as a basis for Athenian education at the times of the rule by the Pisistratids (before 514 B.C.).

9. Possibly a contemporary of Klearchos, who copied also the stele at Delphi in an effort to circulate an accurate text. As we have learned from the epigram of Klearchos, the name of the copier was noted on a manuscript as a guarantee that the copy was free from later changes and addenda.

10. The enormous number of manuscripts on the "Commandments" in Libraries and institutions has never been used for a critical edition of their text. We know now that we have at least three different text-traditions (Sosiades, Klearchos, Anonymous) and almost 50% of the text circulating in the 3rd c. B.C.

11. Aldus included the "Commandments" and several other *opuscula* in his first edition of Theocritus (Venice, 1495). H. Diels lists in Dittb. *Syll.*³ 1268 the major manuscripts published.

12. F. Schultz, "Die Sprüche der delphischen Säule," *Philologus* 24 [1866] 193-226. A. Delatte, "Les Sentences des Sept Sages du Manuscrit d'Athènes 1070," *Fontes Ambrosiani* xxiv; (Milano, 1951) 13-18.

13. Most of the testimonia are collected by F. Schultz (note 12) 193-202.

14. W.K.C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy I* (Cambridge, 1971) 417.

15. Plato, *Hipparchus* 228c-229. Cf. Plato, *Protagoras* 343a-c.

16. Dittb. *Syll.*³ 1268. See also: L. Robert (note 2) 426-429, Al.N. Oikonomides (note 2) 179.

A few years after I studied the *editio princeps* of the epigram of Klearchos and the closing lines from the "Commandments of the Seven" on the inscribed stele-base from Ai-Khanum, I was looking at a dissertation publishing some Greek papyri in the collection of the University of Athens.¹⁷ It was one of the papyri in this dissertation (identified as a 'school exercise') which I had the great pleasure to re-identify as the oldest known manuscript fragment of the "Commandments of the Seven" in an article published in 1980.¹⁸ One of the most interesting elements in this new fragment was that it had partially preserved the second line from the ancient title of the collection and the first eight of the "Commandments." A better edition of this text, however, demanded either an inspection of the original papyrus or a good photograph. Five years lapsed until I was able to obtain a good photograph of *P. Univ. Athen.* 2782 (the papyrus itself seems to have been lost!) and this did not come as a help from the University library, but from the private files of a personal friend.¹⁹

In preparing the revised text of the papyrus fragment for publication, I soon came to realize that what I was planning was not what was really needed. From the fragment of the papyrus (*Egypt*), the inscription from Miletropolis (*Asia Minor*) and the inscriptions from Ai-Khanum (*Afghanistan*), we are given the rare opportunity to reconstruct part of an older edition of the "Commandments of the Seven" (as they were known to the Hellenistic world in the 3rd c. B.C.) *ca.* seven hundred years earlier than the date when the *Anthologium* of Ioannes Stobaeus was compiled and introduced to the schools. This was the text really needed by fellow scholars and teachers and by no means some meagre notes on the first ten lines of it!

So I revised my first plans and as a result of this revision, the fragments of this Hellenistic edition of the "Commandments of the Seven" are now grouped together as one "New Text," according to the order indicated in the copy of the "Commandments" of Sosiades as preserved

by Stobaeus. Then, when I was arranging the cross-references between the "New Text" and the Sosiades-copy, I realized one more thing. The two reference editions of Stobaeus not only rarely appeared in minor and personal libraries, but in the particular case of the "Commandments of the Seven" both were not prepared to be handy for cross-reference, because the commandments were not individually numbered in them.

Following these observations, a new edition of the Sosiades-copy had to be prepared numbering the commandments in Hense's text. By arranging the Greek text of the 147 commandments in three columns on the same page, I tried to give not only a vague idea of what the arrangement of the commandments on the lost stele from Ai Khanum might have been, but to provide also a visual proof that the whole text of the "Commandments of the Seven" could fit well on one stone stele.

Facing the page of Greek text, also in three columns, an English translation of the commandments is printed. Despite my firm belief that in our times any important Greek text should be accompanied by an adequate English translation, even in articles for scholarly journals, in the case of the "Commandments of the Seven," I have my doubts about the right of an editor to provide *one translation* for many of them. These thought provoking brief commandments are by no means the type of text that can be assigned easily as having *one* meaning. By translating them in another language, there is always the danger to push the reader to accept a meaning originating from your own misunderstanding of the text, or not towards the basic meaning but to a secondary one. Even the ancient Greeks had severe difficulties in fully understanding many of the commandments and especially the most 'archaic' ones. We must always remember that the original inscription "in the most holy Pythian shrine" was cut on the stele sometime in the early 6th c. B.C. (if not earlier) and that the Greek language, even in our own times is continuing to grow, change,

cont. on p. 72

17. M.G. Tsoukalas, 'Ανέκδοτοι φιλολογικοί καὶ ἰδιωτικοὶ πάπυροι (Athens, 1962).

18. See: A.I.N. Oikonomides (note 2).

19. My thanks are due to Basil Mandilaras for his kindness, and also for permitting the publication of this photograph (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1: *Inscriptio Bactriana* (CRAI 1968, 421-426). The base for the stele with "The Commandments of the Seven" which once stood in the hero-shrine of Kineas at Ai Khanum. The inscription to the left is the dedicatory epigram of Klearchos (see: p. 67) and the one to the right, the last five "Commandments" which did not fit on the stele (see p. 71: 'New Text' V, lines 69-73).

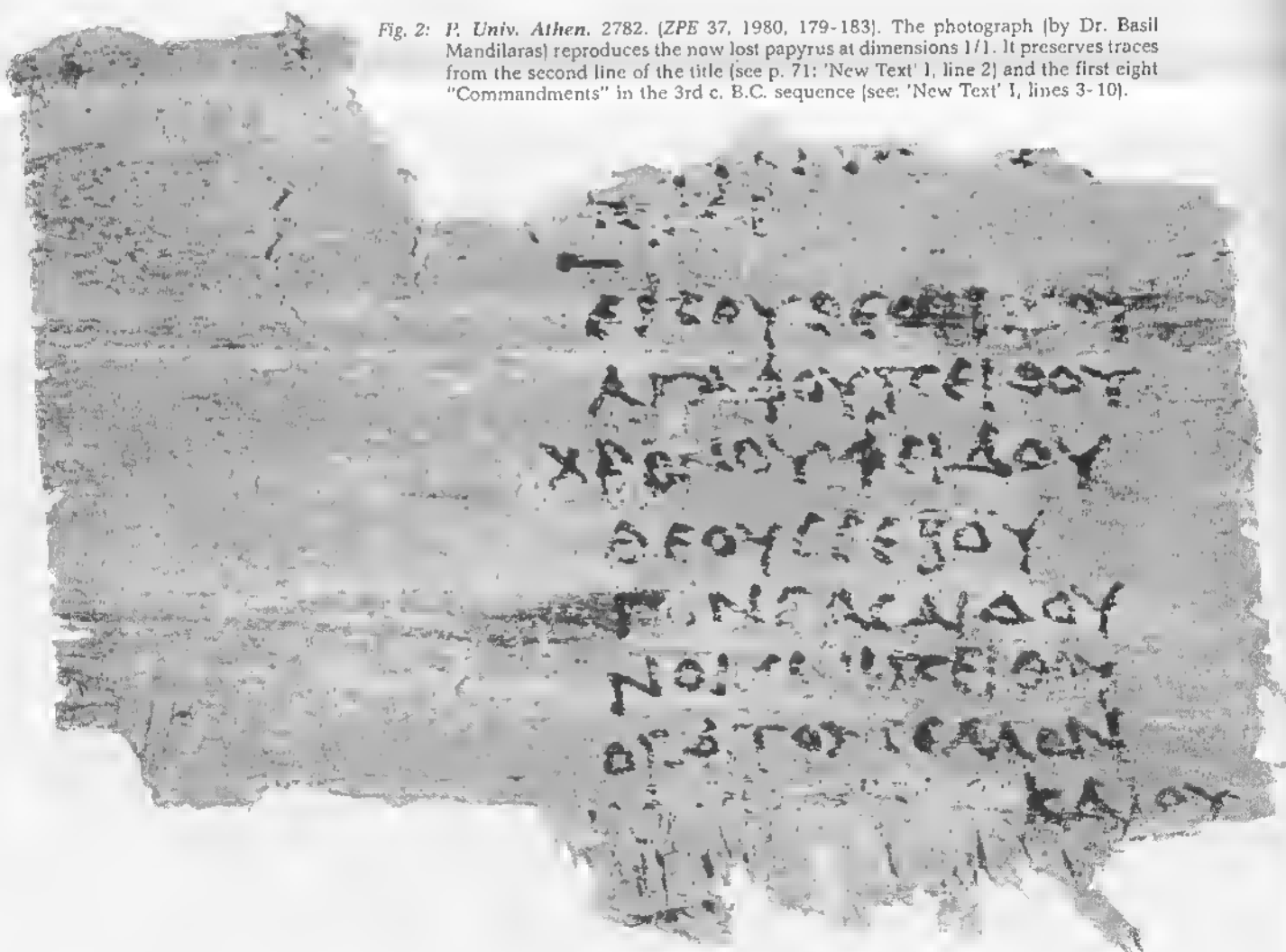


Fig. 2: *P. Univ. Athen. 2782*. (ZPE 37, 1980, 179-183). The photograph (by Dr. Basil Mandilaras) reproduces the now lost papyrus at dimensions 1/1. It preserves traces from the second line of the title (see p. 71: 'New Text' I, line 2) and the first eight "Commandments" in the 3rd c. B.C. sequence (see: 'New Text' I, lines 3-10).

The Commandments of the Seven (New Text formed from P. Univ. Athen. 2782 and the Inscriptions from Miletopolis in Asia Minor and Ai-Khanum in Afghanistan). 3rd c. B.C.

I. P. Univ. Athen. 2782./ Ref. Ed.: ZPE 37 (1980) 179–183. (Ed. Al.N. Oikonomides) 3rd c. B.C. Fig. 2.

II. *Inscr. Miletopolitana*. (Col. I)/ Ref. Ed.: Dittb. *Syll.*³ 1268 (Ed. H. Diels). Cf. Louis Robert, "De Delphes a l'Oxus." CRAI 1968, 426–428. 3rd c. B.C. Fig. 3.

III. *Inscr. Bactriana*. Ref. Ed.: Louis Robert, CRAI 1968, 430–431. 3rd c. B.C. 

IV. *Inscr. Miletopolitana*. (Col. II). Cf. II [above].

V. *Inscr. Bactriana*. Ref. Ed.: Louis Robert, CRAI 1968, 424–426. Cf. Inst. Fernand-Courby, *Nouveau Choix d'Inscriptions Grecques*. (Paris, 1971) 183–185, No. 37. 3rd c. B.C. Fig. 1.

A bold star (★) indicates that the commandment marked with it does not appear in the Sosiades-text preserved by Stobaeus (see our p. 74). When the commandment appears, the reference is given with an S [and its No.] e.g., S 44. If an asterisk follows the number (E.g. S 92*), that indicates a slight difference in words but not in meaning.

I		III	
1	[Υποθήκαι [τῶ]γ ἐ[π]τ]ά.	36	Ε[ὐ]λόγει πάντας Φιλόσοφ[ος γίνου]
3	Ἔπον θεῶι (του)		— — — — —
	Ἀγαθοῦ πείθον		
	Χρόνου φείδον		
6	Θεοὺς σέβον	39	Πέρασ ἐ[πιτέλει]
	Γονέας αἰδοῦ		Πᾶσιν φιλοφρό[νει]
	Νόμωι πείθον		Γυναικὸς ἄρχ[ε]
9	Ὅρα τὸ μέλλον	42	Σαντὸν εὖ πο[ίει]
	Ἡ[τ]ιτῶ ὑπὸ δι[καίου]	45	Εὐπροσήγορος γί[νον]
	— — — — —		Ἀποκρίνου ἐγ καιρῶ[ι]
II		IV	
	[Φί]λοις βοήθει		[Ἀ]μαρτῶν μετανόει
12	[Θ]υμοῦ κράτει	48	Ὁ[φ]θαλμοῦ κράτε[ι]
	[Ἀ]δικα φεύγε		Φιλίαν φύλασσε
	Μαρτύρει ὅσια		Βουλευόν χρόνω[ι].
15	[Ἡ]δονῆς κράτει		Πρ[ο]σσε σὸν [ν]όμω[ι]?
	[Τ]ύχην νό[μ]ωι ἐ[κ]		Τὸ [δί]καιον νέμ[ε]
	[Π]ρόνοιαν τ[ί]μ[α]	51	Ὁμόνοι[αν] ἄσκει
18	Ὅρκωι μὴ χρῶ		Μηθενὸς καταφρόνε[ι]
	[Φ]ιλίαν ἀγάπα		Ἀπόρρητα κρύπτει
	[Π]αιδείας ἔχον	54	Τὸ κρατοῦμ φόβον
21	Δόξαν δίδωκε		Χρόνωι πίστευ[ε]
	Ἀρετὴν ἐπαίνει		Λάβε πρὸς ἡδονήν
	Πρᾶσσε δίκαια	57	Προσκύνει τὸ θεῖο[ν]
24	Χάριν ἀπόδος		Καιρὸμ προσδέχον
	Φίλοις εὐνόει		Ἐχθρὰν διαλύου
	[Ἐ]χθροὺς ἀμύνον	60	Ἐπὶ ῥώμῃ κανχῶ
27	Συγγενεῖς ἄσκει		Γῆρας προσδέχον
	[Κ]ακίας ἀπέχον		Χρῶ τῶι συμφέροντ[ι]
	[Κ]οινὸς γίνου	63	Εὐφημίαν ἄσκ[ε]
30	Τὰ ἴδια φύλασσε		Ψεῦδος αἰσχύν[ο]ν
	Φίλῳ χαρίζον		Ἀπέχθειαν φεύγε
	Ἰβριν μείσει	66	Πιστεύων μὴ α. . .
33	[Ε]ὐφημος γίνου		Πλούτει δ[ικαίως]
	Ἰκέτας ἐλέει		Ὁμολογ[ί]αις ἔμμενε
	[Υ]ί[ο]ς πα[ίδευε]		— — — — —
	— — — — —	V	
		69	Παῖς ὦν κόσμιος γίνου,
			ἡβῶν ἐγκρατής,
			μέσος δίκαιος,
		72	πρεσβύτης εὐβουλος,
			τελευτῶν ἄλυπος.

In a world where for more than two decades of centuries the Judeo-Christian tradition has been proclaiming as the supreme ethical law of humanity, a severe and primitive group of "Ten Commandments," the rediscovery and reevaluation of a more perfect ancient ethical law, based on higher cultural standards, is definitely bound to create some questions not easy to answer. The most important of them already stands in front of us: "How can one believe that the "Ten Commandments" represent the direct words of God to Mankind when the *pagan* 'Commandments of the Seven' express a higher concept and a more realistic vision of ethical law?"

There is nothing metaphysical or mysterious related to the origins of the material which was used for the formation of the Greek ethical law. Popular wisdom first created proverbs and the best of these proverbs were accepted as major ethical guide-lines. "Seven Wise Men" coming from all parts of the Greek world met at Delphi (early 6th c. B.C.) with the purpose of forming a code from all these ethical maxims. Then, the code they compiled from the maxims they selected was inscribed on a stele of stone erected in front of Apollo's temple, 'publishing' thus the official text for anybody who wished to inspect it.

And the stele stood in its place for centuries and generations of Greek teachers, philosophers and common men copied it. And the copies travelled to every corner of the Greek world and far outside it after the conquests of Alexander the Great. To be a human being and act like one, as far as the Greeks were concerned, needed not a severe god terrifying the crowds and burning bushes demanding respect for himself by threats of destruction and doom. All that was needed for establishing an ethical law for a nation, a people or a city was to teach the younger generations the wisdom of the past on what one should and shouldn't do in a human society.

Behind every "Commandment" stands not a God, but an anonymous sage who is trying to open up in other people's minds a revelation of the nature of life.

* * *

From the Renaissance to our day, classical scholars have tried and continue to try to provide for their students, easy to comprehend books on 'beginning Greek.' It is a real irony that none of those who have tried this task knew anything until now about "The Commandments of the Seven," the work which was used to teach how to read and write, plus how to think in Greek, to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aeschylus and Aristophanes (to mention a few). We needed to excavate a Greek inscription at a site on the highlands of Afghanistan before we came to the

understanding that the manuscript tradition had already preserved for us the most valuable text for 'beginning Greek,' which, in our 'wisdom,' we had never thought or tried to use for the same purpose.

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW? The answer is very simple: We have to go back to the roots! We know that "The Commandments of the Seven" is the earliest known didactic collection of Greek wisdom and we know also that it has successfully served Greek education for more than twenty full centuries. Regarding its ethical standard, all we can say is that it stands at a higher level than the Mosaic decalogue without claiming to be the word of any god, at the same time that it teaches total respect and obedience to Divine power.

As a text to be taught to students who are just starting to read Greek, we must observe that "The Commandments of the Seven" are very close to the dream-concept of a first reading-book. The sentences are brief and each one of them is dedicated to a different subject in the periphery of ethical conduct. Most of the verbs are in imperative (an easy way out of the complicated verb-forms which confuse the beginner) and the rest of the vocabulary is formed by the most essential words for a sound foundation in the most pure form of the ancient Greek language.

Facing brief sentences and simple vocabulary expressing high values in human ethics, the student will have to study very carefully among the different meanings of each word used in every commandment to fully comprehend its aim. That means not only a very productive use of the Greek-English Lexicon, but also a considerable expansion of the vocabulary controlled by the student if we count the different meanings of the same word he has to learn before he selects the right one.

So, go on and use "The Commandments of the Seven" in class and be amazed what your students will learn from it. Not only will they be saved from studying sentences that work faster than sleeping pills, like "the horses of Alcibiades will not run in the next race," but they will also save the money that they would have to pay for the privilege of studying ancient Greek composed by the dregs of text-book 'writers.'

This article may be reproduced in any number of copies necessary for a class in ancient Greek, with the permission of the writer and the publishers. The permission is given with the hope that teachers of Greek in our educational institutions will start thinking that which costs more is not necessarily the better or the best.

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Ὑποθήκαι τῶν Ἑπτά. (Stobaeus 3.1.173 W. & Hense./ 3.80 Meineke) Σωσιάδου <ἀναγραφῇ>.

Ἔπον θεῶ	Φόνον ἀπέχον	Πόνει μετ' εὐκλείας
Νόμῳ πείθον	Εὖχον δυνατά	100 Πράττε ἀμετανοήτως
Θεοὺς σέβον	Σοφοῖς χρῶ	Ἀμαρτάνων μετανόει
Γονεῖς αἰδοῦ	Ἥθος δοκίμαζε	Ὁφθαλμοῦ κράτει
5 Ἦτι τῷ ὑπὸ δικαίου	55 Λαβὼν ἀπόδος	Βουλευόντ' χρόνῳ
Γινώθι μαθὼν	Ἵφορῷ μηδένα	Πράττε συντόμως
Ἀκούσας νόει	Τέχνη χρῶ	105 Φιλίαν φύλαττε
Σαντὸν ἴσθι	Ὅ μέλλεις, δός	Εὐγνώμων γίνου
Γαμεῖν μέλλε	Εὐεργεσίας τίμα	Ὁμόνοϊαν δίωκε
10 Καιρὸν γινώθι	60 Φθόνει μηδενί	Ἄρρητον κρύπτει
Φρόνει θνητά	Φυλακῇ πρόσσεχε	Τὸ κρατοῦν φοβοῦ
Ξένος ὦν ἴσθι	Ἑλπίδα αἰνεῖ	110 Τὸ συμφέρον θηρῷ
Ἑστίαν τίμα	Διαβολὴν μίσει	Καιρὸν προσδέχου
Ἄρχε σεαντοῦ	Δικαίως κτῶ	Ἐχθρὰς διάλυε
15 Φίλοις βοήθει	65 Ἀγαθοὺς τίμα	Γῆρας προσδέχου
Θυμοῦ κράτει	Κριτὴν γινώθι	Ἐπὶ ῥώμῃ μὴ κανχῷ
Φρόνησιν ἄσκει	Γάμον κράτει	115 Εὐφημίαν ἄσκει
Πρόνοϊαν τίμα	Τύχην νόμιζε	Ἀπέχθειαν φεῦγε
Ὅρκῳ μὴ χρῶ	Ἐγγύην φεῦγε	Πλούτει δικαίως
20 Φιλίαν ἀγάπα	70 Ἀπλῶς διαλέγῃ	Δόξαν μὴ λείπει
Παιδείας ἀντέχον	Ὁμοίοις χρῶ	Κακίαν μίσει
Δόξαν δίωκε	Δαπανῶν ἄρχον	120 Κινδύνου φρονίμως
Σοφίαν ζήλον	Κτώμενος ἥδου	Μανθάνων μὴ κάμνει
Καλὸν εὖ λέγει	Αἰσχύνῃ σέβου	Φειδόμενος μὴ λείπει
25 Ὑέγε μηδένα	75 Χάριν ἐκτέλει	Χρησμοὺς θαύμαζε
Ἐπαίνει ἀρετὴν	Εὐτυχίαν εὖχου	Οὓς τρέφεις, ἀγάπα
Πράττει δίκαια	Τύχην στέργει	125 Ἀπόντι μὴ μάχου
Φίλοις εὐνόει	Ἀκούων ὄρα	Πρεσβύτερον αἰδοῦ
Ἐχθροὺς ἀμύνου	Ἐργάζου κτητά	Νεώτερον δίδασκε
30 Εὐγένειαν ἄσκει	80 Ἔριν μίσει	Πλούτῳ ἀπίσται
Κακίας ἀπέχον	Ὅνειδος ἔχθαιρε	Σεαντὸν αἰδοῦ
Κοινὸς γίνου	Γλῶτταν ἴσχε	130 Μὴ ἄρχε ὑβρίζειν
ἴδια φύλαττε	Ὑβριν ἀμύνου	Προγόνους στεφάνου
Ἀλλοτριῶν ἀπέχον	Κρίνει δίκαια	Θνήσκει ὑπὲρ πατρίδος
35 Ἀκούε πάντα	85 Χρῶ χρήμασιν	Τῷ βίῳ μὴ ἄχθου
Εὐφημος ἴσθι	Ἀδωροδόκητος δικάζει	Ἐπὶ νεκρῷ μὴ γέλα
Φίλῳ χαρίζου	Αἰτιῷ παρόντα	135 Ἀτυχοῦντι συνάχθου
Μηδὲν ἄγαν	Λέγει εἰδῶς	Χαρίζου ἀβλαβῶς
Χρόνον φείδου	Βίας μὴ ἔχου	Μὴ ἐπὶ παντὶ λυποῦ
40 Ὅρα τὸ μέλλον	90 Ἀλύπως βίου	Ἐξ εὐγενῶν γέννα
Ὑβριν μίσει	Ὁμίλει πρῶτως	Ἐπαγγέλου μηδενί
Ἰκέτας αἰδοῦ	Πέρας ἐπιτέλει μὴ	140 Φθιμένους μὴ ἀδίκει
Πᾶσιν ἀρμόζουσιν	ἀποδειλιῶν	Εὖ πάσχει ὡς θνητὸς
Υἱὸς παίδευε	Φιλοφρόνει πᾶσιν	Τύχῃ μὴ πίστευε
45 Ἐχὼν χαρίζου	Ποῖς μὴ καταρῶ	Παῖς ὦν κόσμιος ἴσθι,
Δόλον φοβοῦ	95 Γυναικὸς ἄρχε	ἡβῶν ἐγκρατής,
Εὐλόγει πάντας	Σεαντὸν εὖ ποιεῖ	145 μέσος δίκαιος,
Φιλόσοφος γίνου	Εὐπροσήγορος γίνου	πρεσβύτης εὐλόγος,
Ὅσια κρῖνε	Ἀποκρίνου ἐν καιρῷ	τελευτῶν ἄλυπος.
50 Γνοὺς πράττει		

The Commandments of the Seven (= the copy of Sosiades preserved by Stobaeus)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Follow God. | Shun murder. | Struggle with glory. |
| Obey the law. | Pray for things possible. | 100 Act without repenting. |
| Worship the Gods. | Consult the wise. | Repent of sins. |
| Respect your parents. | Test the character. | Control the eye. |
| 5 Be overcome by justice. | 55 Give back what you have received. | Give a timely counsel. |
| Know what you have learned. | Down-look no one. | Act quickly. |
| Perceive what you have heard. | Use your skill. | 105 Guard friendship. |
| Be yourself. | Do what you mean to do. | Be grateful. |
| Intend to get married. | Honor a benefaction. | Pursue harmony. |
| 10 Know your opportunity. | 60 Be jealous of no one. | Keep deeply the top secret. |
| Think as a mortal. | Be on your guard. | Fear ruling. |
| If you are a stranger act like one. | Praise hope. | 110 Pursue what is profitable. |
| Honor the hearth (or Hestia). | Despise a slanderer. | Accept due measure. |
| Control yourself. | Gain possessions justly. | Do away with enmities. |
| 15 Help your friends. | 65 Honor good men. | Accept old age. |
| Control anger. | Know the judge. | Do not boast in might. |
| Exercise prudence. | Master wedding-feasts. | 115 Exercise (religious) silence. |
| Honor providence. | Recognize fortune. | Flee enmity. |
| Do not use an oath. | Flee a pledge. | Acquire wealth justly. |
| 20 Love friendship. | 70 Speak plainly. | Do not abandon honor. |
| Cling to discipline. | Associate with your peers. | Despise evil. |
| Pursue honor. | Govern your expenses. | 120 Venture into danger prudently. |
| Long for wisdom. | Be happy with what you have. | Do not tire of learning. |
| Praise the good. | Revere a sense of shame. | Do not stop to be thrifty. |
| 25 Find fault with no one. | 75 Fulfill a favor. | Admire oracles. |
| Praise virtue. | Pray for happiness. | Love whom you rear. |
| Practice what is just. | Be fond of fortune. | 125 Do not oppose someone absent. |
| Be kind to friends. | Observe what you have heard. | Respect an elder. |
| Watch out for your enemies. | Work for what you can own. | Teach a youngster. |
| 30 Exercise nobility of character. | 80 Despise strife. | Do not trust wealth. |
| Shun evil. | Detest disgrace. | Respect yourself. |
| Be impartial. | Restrain the tongue. | 130 Do not begin to be insolent. |
| Guard what is yours. | Keep yourself from insolence. | Crown your ancestors. |
| Shun what belongs to others. | Make just judgments. | Die for your country. |
| 35 Listen to everyone. | 85 Use what you have. | Do not be discontented by life. |
| Be (religiously) silent. | Judge incorruptibly. | Do not make fun of the dead. |
| Do a favor for a friend. | Accuse one who is present. | 135 Share the load of the unfortunate. |
| Nothing to excess. | Tell when you know. | Gratify without harming. |
| Use time sparingly. | Do not depend on strength. | Grieve for no one. |
| 40 Foresee the future. | 90 Live without sorrow. | Beget from noble routes. |
| Despise insolence. | Live together meekly. | Make promises to no one. |
| Have respect for suppliants. | Finish the race without shrinking back. | 140 Do not wrong the dead. |
| Be accommodated in everything. | Deal kindly with everyone. | Be well off as a mortal. |
| Educate your sons. | Do not curse your sons. | Do not trust fortune. |
| 45 Give what you have. | 95 Rule your wife. | As a child be well-behaved, |
| Fear deceit. | Benefit yourself. | as a youth — self-disciplined, |
| Speak well of everyone. | Be courteous. | 145 as of middle-age — just, |
| Be a seeker of wisdom. | Give a timely response. | as an old man — |
| Choose what is divine. | | sensible, on reaching the |
| 50 Act when you know. | | end — without sorrow |

Commentary to the "New Text" of The Commandments of the Seven (3rd c. B.C.)

[see: p. 71]

The 'New Text,' formed from the texts of one papyrus and three inscriptions, preserves only 70 commandments. Comparing it with the copy of Sosiades, which preserved 147 commandments, we understand that what we presently have represents almost 50% of the version known in the 3rd c. B.C.

Striking is the fact that from a total of 70 commandments in our text, 17 do not appear in the copy of Sosiades (★) and 10 more are variations of commandments listed in it. Unfortunately, statistics cannot be of much help in this case because the

majority of the differences appear in the inscription from Miletopolis (the biggest part of our 'New Text'), while the texts of the papyrus and the two other inscriptions together record only one commandment not in Sosiades (line 4) and one only minor variation (line 72). At this point any further observations may lead to a number of unsupportable speculations and nonsensical conclusions without the help of a new unpublished text of "The Commandments" from papyrus or inscription dating also in the 3rd c. B.C.

* * *

Line 4: The commandment is unlisted in Sosiades and the m/s tradition. A possible translation will be: *Obey the virtuous.*

Lines 6-8: The sequence of the three commandments (disturbed in Sosiades and the other m/ss) was the same in the early 5th c. B.C. as we learn from a fragment of Euripides (Nauck, *NTG*² 853; see CB 63, 1987, 66).

Line above line 11: The facsimile drawing indicates traces of two letters which I think can be transcribed: [...]ΠΙΟ[-] (See our Fig. 3 on p. 72). A possible restoration is [Ἄλυπτος βίου] from the commandment S 90. Translate: *Live without sorrow.*

Lines 13-15: We should note that the three commandments (unlisted in Sosiades and the other m/ss) appear as an interpolation due to the 'editor' of the copy used for the inscription of Miletopolis, who repeated the same in lines 49-51 and 55-57. A translation of the three interpolated commandments will be: *Avoid the unjust. Testify what is right. Control pleasure.*

Line 22: Translate; *Praise virtue.*

Line 24: Translate; *Return a favour.*

Line 27: Translate; *Train your relatives.*

Line 35: Questionable restoration. Cf. the facsimile drawing in Fig. 3.

Lines 49-51: A second interpolation of a group of three commandments (unlisted in Sosiades and the other m/ss) by the 'editor' Cf. our comm. on lines 13-15 above. Translate: *Act according to the law. Administer justice. Live in concordance.*

Lines 55-57: A third interpolation of three unlisted commandments as in the cases of lines 13-15 and 49-51 (see our comm. above). Translate: *Believe in time. Receive for the pleasure. Prostrate before the divine.*

Line 60: While the Sosiades copy and all the m/ss say exactly the opposite (S 114 *Do not boast in might*), the 'editor' of the copy used for the inscription of Miletopolis decided that this was not the right commandment to be inscribed in a gymnasium. So by omitting the MH from the original he transformed the commandment to: *Boast in might.*

Line 62: Translate; *Use the one who has the same interests as you.*

Line 64: Translate; *Be embarrassed to lie.*

Line 66: Since the restorations proposed are rather questionable, a sure translation is presently impossible. The commandment seems to try to give a message like: *If you believe in something do not be scared to act for it.*

Line 68: Translate; *Be firm on what has been agreed.*

Line 72: The difference between a πρεσβύτης εὐβολος (inscr.) and one εὐλογος (Sosiades & m/ss) does not change at all the meaning of the commandment.